

LANIGAN/MANITOU WATERSHED NEWS

Highlighting the Lanigan/Manitou Agri-Environmental Group Farm Plan

November 2007 Issue

Over 70 Producers Join the Group Farm Plan

Producers in the Lanigan/Manitou watershed are eager to take advantage of the funding and technical assistance in the Agri-Environmental Group Farm Plan. Advisor Nancy Gray says over 70 producers have gone through the program to develop plans for their livestock operations.

"With water quality a main concern in the region, most producers are moving their cattle away from their corral sites and leaving the animals to swath graze, bale graze or are simply feeding them out on the grass or stubble land. This allows the manure and urine to stay on the land and increases the nutrients like nitrogen that are available to the grass and/or cropland the next year," says Gray.

These techniques also help protect the water sources in or around the yard site. With fewer animals in the yard site and less waste to mix with the snow melt runoff, the whole yard benefits from the decreased nutrients flowing by areas such as wells and drinking water sources which could become contaminated.

Ivan Allin, a producer from north of Manitou Lake, has fenced the riparian area by his corrals, protecting the ground water that recharges his well.

"By prohibiting access of his cattle from this riparian area, the nutrient load and possible contamination will be greatly reduced," explained Gray.

Allin is now going to winter his cattle out in the grass fields in different areas of the home quarter by using a winter watering system and flax bale windbreak to keep them comfortable until calving. By using this wintering practice, his animals are kept out of the yard site between 90 to 120 days and away from the trees and sheltered area which runs into the riparian area.

Other producers in the Lanigan/Manitou watershed have fenced off their riparian areas so that livestock cannot have direct access to these sensitive sites. This allows for less impact on riparian vegetation, keeping the water in better quality and the whole watershed in better condition, as these riparian plants act as filters and stabilizers in spring runoff situations.



Flax bale windbreaks



The recharge area for the well has been fenced off.

Minimizing Producer Impact on Source Water

Several producers met with Lanigan/Manitou Agri-Environment Group Farm Plan Advisor Nancy Gray for a field day to learn about pasture management, solar livestock watering, electric fencing and well decommissioning.

"We had an excellent electric fencing demonstration from Lamb Acres. They helped troubleshoot problems the producers were having and gave them hands-on experience at different techniques for splicing wire and knots for corners and gates," says Gray. "Kelln Solar also gave a presentation and demonstrated the winter solar watering systems that are available to producers who want to keep the cattle out of the riparian areas and dugouts as the weather gets colder."

Pasture management techniques were also discussed. "Assessing how your grazing system is working for the grass is important. Producers learned about using tame pasture assessment sheets which give guidelines for good pasture attributes and indicators for overgrazing."

The abandoned well, in the R.M. of Leroy, was decommissioned using bentonite clay. Councilor Calvin Michel says the R.M. jumped at the chance to have the well properly decommissioned. "By having the well sealed up, that takes the pressure off the next generation who won't have to worry about the hazards of it, because it won't be there."

"Abandoned water wells that aren't decommissioned pose a contamination threat to the ground water. When you open up a well to access the aquifer beneath the surface, you're also opening up a pathway for pollutants to enter the ground water. Decommissioning abandoned water wells keeps that contamination from occurring," explained Saskatchewan Watershed Authority hydrogeologist Kei Lo.

The well decommissioning used bentonite chips to form a one foot plug of bentonite in the bottom of the well, followed by clay which was then added until the level in the well was equal with the depth of the hole excavated around the well. The backhoe then removed the top portion of the casing, and more bentonite chips were poured on top of the old column. This formed another one foot plug of bentonite at the top of the well. Finally, more clay was added until mounded at the surface.



The well decommissioning workshop was hosted by the Lanigan/Manitou Watershed Advisory Committee, the Meachem Hills Forage Club and the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority.

For More Information:

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Producers interested in learning more about wintering site management, riparian area management or any aspect of the Lanigan/Manitou Agri-Environmental Group Farm Plan, are welcome to call Nancy Gray at home at 946-3135 or cell at 946-8107. Nancy can meet with you personally to discuss these management practices and the amount of funding you may be qualified to receive. Under the Group Farm Plan, wintering site management projects are cost-shared at 50 per cent to a maximum of \$15,000 until March 31, 2008. Riparian area management projects are cost-shared at 50 per cent to a maximum of \$20,000 until March 31, 2008.



Western Beef
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